

## THE STORY OF THE OLD JEWISH COLONEL IN ROUMANIA.

By Leo Wolfson.

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Colonel Maurici Brociner, the only Jewish colonel in the Roumanian army, was born in Yassi, July 15, 1855. His parents were honest, respectable folk who had emigrated from Galicia to Roumania several years before. The young Brociner attended the Roumanian primary schools and later pursued his studies in Czernowitz, Gratz, and Vienna. In 1874 he returned to Roumania, to Galatz where his parents had in the meanwhile established themselves. In order not to break up the commercial career on which he had decided, by the year's military service which would be required of him two years later, he joined the army as a volunteer.

After a year's service, he was discharged from the Eighth Infantry Regiment with the rank of a non-commissioned officer, and entered into his father's firm. He worked there until the war of 1877 broke out, when he was mobilized together with his regiment. His brilliant military career dates from that time.

Mr. Brociner has been an officer in the Roumanian army for 42 years, and he has risen from a non-commissioned officer to the rank of colonel. For many years Colonel Brociner was the only Jewish officer in the Roumanian army, although Jews have always served in it. At the battle of Grivitza between the Roumanian and the Turkish armies in 1877, Brociner won a lasting niche for himself in the annals of Roumanian history. There was a time when the Roumanians glorified in Brociner's heroism, with the people his name was a household word, and a grateful king rewarded him with many honors, medals and decorations and showed him the greatest consideration and confidence.

Roumanian history contains many references to Brociner, and the War Ministry has many documents which confirm his valiant achievements during that war.

Here is one of the documents, a communication from the commandant of the Eighth Infantry Regiment sent to the military command:

"The undersigned commandant of the Eighth Infantry Regiment vouches that Maurici Brociner served in this Regiment from November 15, 1876, until August 30, 1878, on which day he was severely wounded in the battle and bombardment of Grivitza. During the time of his service, he conducted himself in an exemplary manner, and did his duty freely, honorably and magnanimously. August 28, 1877 was for Brociner a special day of recognition and honor. On that day, on the battlefield, before an attack, I informed him that by a decree of July 15, he was being recalled to Bucharest. But instead of taking the suggestion of returning to Bucharest, where there was no danger, he requested and insisted that he be permitted to remain with his regiment at the battlefield, and to take further part in the fighting. He participated in the battle on August 30th, under the command of Captain Walter Maracineanu and was twice wounded during the fighting.

(Signed) IPATESCU."

In recognition of his courage in remaining on the battlefield, he was promoted to the rank of First Lieutenant, and was awarded his gold stripes with great ceremony in the presence of soldiers and officers. Captain Maracineanu

delivered a speech on the occasion in which he said:

"Brociner, your honor, the honor of your family, of your whole race and of your people lies now in your hands. The battle begins. I want you to be the first on the fortification, and the country will know how to reward you." Brociner modestly replied that he would do his duty.

And he did it. When his Captain fell dead during the attack, Brociner assumed the command, and although a bullet struck him, and his blood was flowing he continued the attack; he was the first to reach the Grivitza fortification and while he was raising the Roumanian flag as a sign of victory another bullet struck him, and he fell severely wounded. An ambulance of the Jewish "Lodge Zion" found him more dead than alive, and he was taken to a hospital. The whole army

rang with the heroism of the Jewish lieutenant, and on his sick bed in the hospital, he was decorated with a distinguished service medal. It is worth noting that at the time Brociner was not a Roumanian citizen. On his return to his home town of Galatz, Roumania, he was given an official reception, at which all the prominent officials of the district were present, and he was praised without stint.

It must be admitted that the country recognized Brociner's service, and that he was also well rewarded. In 1879, the government proclaimed him a Roumanian citizen, and the King decorated him with all the military medals. The late King Charles took a fancy to the young Brociner and in 1882, he appointed him as Court Treasurer in the royal palace. Afterward, he appointed him to the important office of Director of the Royal

Palace Marechal's Bureau, and he was also promoted to the rank of captain. Later he was made a Major, and finally a colonel.

Colonel Brociner spent thirty-seven years in the Roumanian royal palace—the only Jew in the royal household holding responsible and important offices. King Charles during his life esteemed Colonel Brociner highly, and the colonel was also on most friendly terms with the late Queen Elizabeth, who was widely known as a writer under the nom de plume of Carmen Sylva. In one of her books "Penaten-vinkel," she writes the following about Brociner:

"In our household 'Nathan the Wise' is a daily guest. Just as we have represented in our household all the sects, Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox, so we have also a Jew as secretary. In fact, I have a Jew as my prin-

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